

WESTERN PEOPLE

Supplement to The Western Producer

Nov. 9, 2000



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REMEMBRANCE DAY ISSUE

WESTERN PEOPLE

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Remembrance Day

Once in every year they come
to stand
in silence
Failing eyes immobile
in aging bodies held erect
they stand
in silence
Do they see the pomp
that ebbs and flows around them
as they stand
in silence
or are they in some far off place
that we can never go
If we could only see
behind those failing eyes
would we better understand
why they come each year
to stand
in silence

— Charles Reid

COVER PHOTO

Cenotaph at Morden, Man. Photo by Karen Morrison.

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Dear Reader

In 1991, I interrupted the usual banter that occupies this corner of the little magazine in order to provide space for something relevant. That something was a poem written by the late Betty Bailey that appeared in the *Western Producer* magazine in November of 1954. (It wasn't called *Western People* in those days.)

Many poems speak to me in strange ways, or not at all, but this one is poignant and powerful, and will resonate in many a mother's heart. Not only those who have "been there, done that" but also the lucky ones who haven't.

Michael Gillgannon

After November 11

There must be many mothers such as I.
Call him a hero. Say he heard the call
For faith or freedom —
that he knew no fear
And died in glory. I have heard it all.
It has not soothed one hour of bitterness
Nor stayed the falling of a single tear.
But this is certain — if I could but know
Beyond all doubting, that there would not be
Ever again the sound of earth gone mad
Nor call to arms, nor
empty victory
Then would I rest tonight, serene and glad
As when I heard his earliest infant cry.
There must be many mothers such as I.

— Betty Bailey

To the many who were lost at sea

History by Bob Thompson

The *Jervis Bay* was a freighter of 14,000 tons with Australian registry rusting in a port south of Singapore when she was called into service early in the Second World War.

Her captain, Fogarty Feegan, had also been brought out of retirement. His ship, with its rusted iron hull and saw-toothed screw, capable of 12 knots maximum, was recruited to haul cargoes of desperately needed provisions and ammunition to battle-scarred Britain.

Feegan had a crew of 100 Royal Canadian Navy volunteer reservists. They brought the ship from its tropical waters, through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Gibraltar, across the submarine infested Atlantic to Halifax, where she unloaded her precious cargo.

The *Jervis Bay* then joined a convoy of 38 ships headed for Britain. Armed with a single battery of five-inch calibre guns, her gun crews slept at their station, parka hoods covering their faces from the bone-numbing chill of the Atlantic in winter.

On Nov. 5, 1940, the sun broke through the fog bank at dawn, revealing the convoy that was strung out for miles on the Atlantic swells. The *Jervis Bay* fired her practice rounds—and sharp eyes stood on lookout throughout the day. At 5 p.m. a shout came from the crow's nest: "Ship, Sir, off the starboard bow!"

Through his glass, Feegan made out the smoke and finally, the bulk of a monstrous German battleship. He immediately telegraphed his engine room "full speed ahead," ordered "battle stations," instructed all ships in the convoy to scatter and set up a smoke screen and then set out alone to meet the battleship and its 11-inch guns.

In no time a burst of shrapnel raked

the *Jervis Bay*, tearing Feegan's right arm from his jacket. Refusing a tourniquet, he urged his gun crews to keep firing and kept his ship on course, charging directly at the enemy. A second salvo tore the ensign from the mast.

when it sunk on Aug. 8, 1944, in the channel between England and Ireland on its way to help a disabled merchantman. Thirty of the 93 crew lost their lives, many drowning in the two inches of quickly spreading bunker oil.



HMCS *Regina* was sunk on Aug. 8, 1944. It went down in 28 seconds.

The *Jervis Bay*, with guns still firing, was ablaze from stern to bow. Finally, a fatal blow struck the ship below the waterline and her boilers exploded. The *Jervis Bay* sunk by the stern with the loss of all hands, many of them prairie boys.

Of the 38 ships in the convoy, 29 arrived in Britain with their lifesaving cargoes.

Ken Dillabaugh was typical of the prairie lads who had never seen an ocean but joined the Navy. He was born in 1922, in Tompkins, Sask. and spent his childhood on the family farm in Piapot.

He was a 22-year-old torpedo man on the corvette K234, the HMCS *Regina*,



Ken Dillabaugh

It took only 28 seconds for the 1,400-ton corvette to slide beneath the waves. It was never clear whether the *Regina* had been torpedoed or struck a mine.

Fortunately, Dillabaugh had gone on deck for a breath of fresh air. At the moment of impact he was thrown through the air and landed on a depth charge that had rolled, pinning a fellow seamen by the legs. The weight of Dillabaugh's body jarred the depth charger loose, saving his friend's life.

The survivors were taken to England and then sent to Canada on survivors' leave. He had the honor of laying the City of Regina wreath during armistice ceremonies on Nov. 11, 1944.

Dillabaugh, of Victoria, and 12 of the remaining survivors were guests of honor when the new HMCS *Regina* was commissioned on May 5, 1995 in Esquimalt, B.C. ■■



Former nurse Margaret Dewart visits Nebo Monastery, where she toiled in 1944-45 when it housed Number One Canadian General Hospital.

By Beatrice Hunter

"**T**his has to be the place," said our Dutch host, Heimen van Dasselaar, swinging his Land Rover onto a narrow road leading up a hill in the wooded country south of Nijmegen. "A building large enough to house a 600-bed hospital just doesn't disappear from the landscape".

"Everything looks so different. I can't be sure," said war nurse Margaret Dewart. The trees had all grown up since she was here last.

The hospital, Number One Canadian General, was in a monastery a short distance from Nijmegen. In 1945, it was surrounded by open fields and skeletons of the gliders that had carried British paratroopers for the September

So many names

1944 attack on Arnhem were still on the heath.

"I used to walk over to look at them and ponder the fate of the heroic young men who had been dropped there into the jaws of death. Plans for the daring drop, 60 miles behind enemy lines, had gone terribly wrong. Instead of being surprised, the Germans were waiting for them. It was a slaughter."

In front of us looms a large, three-

storey, grey brick building. Its only identification, a plaque over the entrance, declared "built in 1928."

In the early evening dusk, a light glimmers in one of the ground floor windows. Could this be the building where she had helped care for hundreds of Canadian casualties during the campaign to free Holland from five grueling years of Nazi occupation and oppression? In these wooded hills and farther north along the Scheldt estuary, Canadian Forces had been involved in some of the fiercest fighting of the Second World War.

Finally on May 5, 1945, in the nearby village of Wageningen, Lt.-Gen. Henry Crerar, General Officer Commanding, First Canadian Army, accepted the surrender of all German forces in Holland. More than 7,000

Canadians lost their lives in fighting to liberate the Netherlands.

Along with approximately 3,000 other Canadians, Dewart participated in the 10-day Thank You Canada millennium celebrations hosted this year by the people of Holland to mark the 55th anniversary of their National Liberation Day.

"When I was here there were no street addresses; no road signs; no traffic lights; in fact no traffic, except military traffic which crammed the roads. Dutch vehicles had been confiscated. There was no gasoline for civilian use and practically no food. We were at war. Canadian troops were fighting to establish bridgeheads across the Rhine and break through the Siegfried Line. It was a last-ditch stand for the Nazis."

Arnhem was practically destroyed in the battle to capture the famous Arnhem Bridge, van Dasselaar explained. "See that church steeple over there? It was a Nazi snipers' nest. Somehow it withstood the bombardment. The bridge has been renamed John Frost Bridge in honor of Col. Frost and his paratroopers who held the bridge for several days before retreating from overwhelming German resistance."

On the outskirts of Osterbeek, the Hartenstein Hotel now houses the Airborne Museum. In addition to photos and memorabilia, the museum houses realistic dioramas depicting battle scenes of 55 years ago.

It was here that Maj.-Gen. Urquhart, commander of the British Airborne Division, reluctantly gave the order to retreat. Of the 10,000 troops who had parachuted into Holland, only 2,500 reached safety.

The old hospital is now the Nebo monastery, a home for retired priests originally built by the Redemptorist order of priests.

"I remember long corridors bordered in black tile," Dewart explained. "When convoys of wounded were brought in from the Field Dressing Stations three rows of beds were set up along each corridor. The operating

room was on the first floor. There was no elevator in the building. Stretcher cases had to be carried up two or three flights of stairs to the wards and of course the staff had to run up and down stairs all the time.

"Just down the hill was a small hotel. I and some of the 88 Canadian nurses



Top: Dewart in Italy, 1944. Above: with other Canadian veterans at Osterbeek cemetery in May of this year.

who staffed the hospital lived there."

It is now the Sionshoff Hotel.

The hospital corridors opened onto a courtyard within the building, with a gold fish pond in the centre.

"How well I remember snatching a few minutes to get some fresh air out here, especially during those long night shifts," Dewart recalled.

Fifty-five years ago, Dewart was a young auburn-haired nurse in khaki battle dress working 12-hour shifts, seven days a week. The parking lot was full of military vehicles — stretcher bearers unloading wounded from

ambulances, medical orderlies and doctors sorting out critical cases and giving emergency treatment to rows of silent, mud spattered, blood stained casualties.

"Often I was so tired I could not eat when I came off duty," Dewart said. "I'll never forget those soldiers, so young, so badly wounded, amputations, fractures, abdominal and sucking chest wounds. They needed so much care.

"And burns. One night I was making rounds and glanced over at this fellow swathed in bandages. His eyes glowed in the dark. I've never seen anything like it. He had been burned by phosphorous from one of those deadly flame throwers. He didn't make it, poor fellow.

"My room was right over that bar there. Canadian Engineers were stationed nearby and often came to visit. They decided we needed a patio so they scrounged some black and yellow tiles and paved a good-sized space right outside that door. We nurses found colored lights and strung them up in the trees. It was spring and many a night we danced under the stars to Glen Miller and Tommy Dorsey records.

"Just beyond that hill is Osterbeek Military Cemetery," Dewart continued. "Sometimes I used to walk there and look at the markers to see if I knew any of the names. Many of the casualties had belonged to western units — the Regina Rifles, the Winnipeg Winnipeg Rifles, the South Sask-

atchewan Regiment, the Calgary Highlanders. Young lives snuffed out too soon. My heart ached for their bereaved families."

The Dutch people remember that sacrifice and still treat Canadian veterans as saviors. As Apeldoorn's mayor said in his speech of welcome to returning veterans:

"Only those who have experienced loss of freedom can truly appreciate this precious heritage that we pass on to our children and grandchildren. May they always remember the sacrifice of our Canadian liberators." ■

Letters home

Compiled by Winnie Pogmore

By March 1918, Germany had all but won the war. The French and British were exhausted, the infantry greatly depleted, the tanks not effective, and the airplanes unable to destroy German strongholds. Bayonets and poison gas had not stopped the onslaught. On March 30, 1918, the Cavalry Brigade under Lieut. Flowerdew recaptured Moreuil Wood. The tide was turned.

Herbert Spreeman went one mile north into Rifle Wood on March 31, 1918, where he was severely wounded.

Only 15 Cavalry men were left when the Germans retreated and the Allies regrouped.

Spreeman was born in Ontario in 1895 and came west to the Chinook, Alta. area as a young blacksmith.

He served as a constable in the Banff and the Peace River district with the North-West Mounted Police, and in 1917, joined the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), a unit of enlisted NWMP.

The following are excerpts from wartime letters he sent to his sister Viola of Kitchener, Ont.

Jan. 4, 1918

**Trooper H. Spreeman 2270327
Lord Strathcona's Horse C.R.C.R.
Shorncliffe, Kent, England**

Our Christmas was a great one — fit for a king, so don't put yourself out sending boxes, although I do enjoy the good ones you pack. I have beer: stony broke since my pass. Haven't had a good bath for an age: costs sixpence to have one here. Did I tell you I quit smoking? If so, I've misinformed you,



Cpl. Herbert Spreeman.

as I smoke a pipe.

Don't mention this to Mother unless you wish. A man, a pipe and a good book builds character, and is a comfort to a soldier. Oh, Viola, your letter has made me lonely. I feel as though I would like to be home again. The fleeting vision of you at the station in Toronto will never be forgotten. Mother was so brave, I shall never forget how well she bore up, and if one of her boys shall fall a victim of Hunish brutality, she has still one to comfort her in later years.

Feb. 14, 1918

Before I leave for France on Saturday morning I will send you some pins — have them gilded for broaches. Give one to Effie. Leave to London was wonderful, but one does need to be very careful of the girls. Some are fast and furious, and get many a fine young fellow in wrong. People here are eating horse flesh — on base we are classifying our horses and casting some for eating purposes. Imagine eating our own horses.

March 18, 1918

We are rushed at present, and circumstances not favorable for correspondence. Paper in short supply. I assure you dearest sister that your letters cheer me awfully. I enjoy the army more than ever but every night is a hell. Cold is no name for it. One

nearly perishes, but during the day the sun comes out warm and clear. When I return, I long to sleep out under an apple tree or in an old barn.

At last we are in active service. No need to tell you about the

trenches or holes. I'm glad I'm in the Cavalry — we ride with a pack on our backs.

Sometimes we can't believe a war is on — everything dreadfully quiet, nights clear and black. Then the guns open up, and one is almost deafened by the roar of the artillery, and airplanes circle in the sky. Search lights shoot up, machine guns chatter, and all is in an uproar. Damage to the country is awful. Will try to send field cards. Heavy rain makes our horses a fearful state — will need hours of grooming.

Gillett razor blades, writing paper, tobacco and eats are much appreciated.

April 7, 1918

**Canadian General Hospital
Basingstroke, England**

I was hit April 1 in the right thigh — slightly in the left. We have been through hot fighting since arrival in France. The Germans' offence in the news is not exaggerated in the least. She is having her last kick.

All our draft is dead or wounded. My chum was shot through the stomach and died 20 minutes later, saying "Divide my money among the boys." Another chum lay for 13 hours before dying. We could not get him out — oh it was awful! He continually begged me to shoot him.

Others fell by the sword and others

by tossed bombs. Oh, 'twas dreadful, horses and men lay dying everywhere. The Huns out numbered us 10 to one. I could tell you of the mad dashes or charges, but they are not pleasant to remember, let alone talk about.

We rescued an officer after dark with a stretcher made from a horse blanket, two poles, and four bayonets — all less than 200 yards from the enemy. For 10 minutes, bullets rained around us but as if by a miracle, none of us was hit. The French soldiers who I admire, call us the Fighting Devils and are generous to us.

April 15, 1918

Canadian General Hospital Basingstroke

Can now walk with a stick — wound healing but badly swollen. Will be sent to a Convalescent Hospital and then have leave before going back into active service. Fighting now is more in the open with more disastrous results, but we are holding our own, and the U.S. troops are coming in. Our Cavalry suffered very heavily and many of the boys will never use their limbs again.

Nearly all our fellows were lost and an awful bunch of horses. It is a pitiful sight to see a wounded horse lying helpless or standing on three legs. One horse would not leave its master and stood beside the dead rider for hours until finally a bullet brought him down. Their screaming is dreadful to hear.

You may wonder if I have killed any Germans. Well, yes, I have accounted for a few, and I'll tell you that when shells are bursting all around and Fritz is firing not 300 yards away, you do not stop to consider if it is the right thing to do.

All this aside, it's simply awful when one gets used to killing. I'll tell you though, dear sister, a good many times I wonder just what becomes of the souls of these men. Men usually die exactly as they have lived. It's awful isn't it? May God be merciful is the prayer we should have on our lips.

Oh, I ache when I see the old women and children walking along the road with their few belongings — their homes destroyed by war. That is when it comes home to a fellow. What would Canadians think if such would happen to them? Seeing these things, we do not wonder why we are fighting. Don't worry. I am in God's hands.

April 15, 1918

You may wonder dear sister why I spoke of the thoughts and words of a dying man. When it comes to die, everyone who has believed in a faith in Christ dies with a prayer on his lips instead of an oath. For myself, I am not ashamed to admit that I prayed many times for God to be merciful.

June 6, 1918

May be operated on again. MD says something seriously wrong.

Example of a field card, referred to in the March 18 letter.

July 12, 1918

No. XI Gen. Hospital Shorncliffe, Moore Barracks

Third operation a success. The old dead flesh was cut away, and a shell fragment next to the bone was extracted. Now healing properly.

July 25, 1918

Dearest sister, please be patient with me, and answer every question. Here goes — what did Effie say about me when you were there? Did she say, or tell, anything I had written? Tell me everything you can remember. Did she honestly say that should I return a cripple, that she would not turn me down? I am simply dying to know.

Aug. 18, 1918

Received Effie's letter. I think it very jealous and selfish of her to be pleased her brother has been exempted from overseas duty. Think of the families who send two, three, or four sons and they are afraid to send one. I want to forget if I can, so oblige me and don't mention her again!

Sept. 9, 1918

Gen. Hospital

Leaving for Epsom Convalescent Home. Out of bed now after surgery.

Oct. 30, 1918

Have you heard of the dreadful disease called the Flu? Hundreds have died and our M.O.S. is endeavoring to stamp it out. I'm on duty at the Orderly Room. The way the war is going, I may not see France. I've met a special girl of whom I will be proud to introduce to my parents and sisters. She is dead anxious to meet you. Dear sister I know you will like her.

Dec. 30, 1918

Married at Mickleham, Surrey

Aug. 4, 1919

Givons, Leatherhead, Surrey

I'm stopping at Elsie's home on my final leave prior to leaving England . . . I'm anxious to be away from home, although I am just a wee bit sorry to leave old England, as I have begun to grow fond of this quaint old country.

Your loving Bro, Bert.

Spreeman and his war bride came home to Drumheller, Alta., where he blacksmithed with his father Isaac. They later homesteaded in the Millerfield district near East Coulee, often referred to as "Poverty Flats" and supplemented the farm by working in the coal mines during the winter. While threshing, he caught his arm in a belt and was severely injured.

Spreeman later worked with Regal Oil, Lions Oil and Purity 99.

A move to Comox, B. C., brought a career change as a motel operator. He and third wife Alice retired in Penticton, where he died in 1982.

(Winnie Stewart Pogmore of Red Deer, Alta. is Viola's daughter.)



Aboard the *Lady Nelson*, Halifax, 1943.

History by Charles Reid

In 61 A.D. Queen Boudicca swept across East Anglia and routed the Roman Legions at a small country town in Lincolnshire called Stamford. Over 1,000 years later, in 1429, Joan of Arc led a French army in triumph against the English.

The Icini practised total equality of the sexes and women played a full role in all decision making. Boudicca herself was raised and trained as a warrior. As Queen, she was the obvious choice to lead the Icini into battle.

Many male-dominated societies reasoned that women were not physically capable to participate in battle. That does not explain why women were never allowed to fly in combat during the last war. After all, women like Amelia Earhart and Amy Johnson had long since proved that they could handle a plane.

Another reason presented was that the natural attraction between the sexes

would prove a disruptive force that could weaken a soldier's resolve. Yet, it is well known that Soviet women fought alongside men in the First World War and it is doubtful anyone could claim any weakness in Soviet resistance to the German invasion.

A more likely reason is that fear of too much intrusion into their domain was the motivating factor for men and they used these arguments to retain control.

Biographies translated from the 1500s hint darkly that although it was the English who tried Joan and burned her at the stake, it was her own commanders who were fearful of her growing power and tricked her into attacking Compeigne with a force far too small to overcome the English garrison, resulting in her capture.

After that, women were kept out of any real public decision making roles for several centuries.

It was in the Second World War that the barriers really began to crumble. It seems the oddest paradox, that a man

like Adolf Hitler, who saw women as mere receptacles for producing his super race, would be the prime factor in bringing them back into the male domain and a rediscovered freedom.

It would be almost 50 more years and 400 since Joan was burned at the stake, before that last male bastion would fall and women would stand alongside men in actual combat.

This isn't to say that women have not faced danger and death. The men in charge of wars have had no problem in using them in that most dangerous of wartime activities — spying.

It was in this field that women like Violet Szabo and Odette Brailly, the famous British agents who were captured and brutally tortured by the Gestapo, finally blew away the old myth that women could not stand the rigors and brutality of war.

In Canada, this contradiction was even more pronounced, for in the early stages of this war, service women were banned from duty in a war zone, while it was considered perfectly acceptable

for nurses to be sent to those very zones.

The following stories are just a small example of the enormous but too often overlooked contribution made by Canadian women to ultimate victory in that war.

KAY CHRISTIE watched the Japanese officers pull up outside Bowen Road hospital. She already knew that the Hong Kong garrison had surrendered and wondered what their fate would be.

Kay Christie, a nursing sister from Toronto and May Waters, her colleague from Winnipeg had the dubious honor of being the first Canadian women to become prisoners of war.



They themselves did not become victims of the traditional Japanese treatment of women but their colleagues at St. Stephens, just outside Hong Kong, were not so lucky. Here, drunken Japanese, after bayoneting the sick and wounded soldiers, raped every nurse in sight, then beheaded two of them.

Although constantly aware of the threat from the soldiers patrolling the hospital, the nurses at Bowen Hospital nevertheless continued to defy their captors whenever they went on one of their bayoneting sprees by standing in front of their patients and staring down the Japanese until they gave up.

One patient, a man named Geoff Marston from Oshawa, Ont., remarked that he had never seen such cool courage. He noted many of the patients owed their lives to the nurses' continuing defiance of the invader.

A LITTLE KNOWN internment camp in Sumatra was the setting for Joan Bamford-Fletcher's tale.

In the fall of 1945, a jeep pulled up at Bankinang internment camp and out jumped a lone woman. She was wearing the uniform of the FANY's (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry).

Lieut. Joan Bamford-Fletcher, a native of Regina, had been sent to the camp to

evacuate the prisoners, now that the war was over. She had no troops to assist her and no idea how she was going to transport 1,700 sick and weak men 280 miles to Padang and safety.

The only route out lay through the hostile jungles of Indonesia.

A quick appraisal of the situation told Bamford-Fletcher that the only fit men around were the Japanese camp guards so she co-opted 70 of them and commandeered 15 of their trucks.

Using the Japanese as drivers and guards, she began the task of ferrying her charges through Indonesia, to Padang in the South.

With machine guns mounted on the trucks, the soldiers were able to keep the marauders at bay.

When the British offered her their own troops for escort, Bamford-Fletcher refused, preferring to keep her Japanese soldiers, who performed their task with amazing dedication.

For her efforts in bringing every single man to safety, she received a near fatal dose of swamp fever and the M.B.E.

THE FIRST MILITARY aviatrix in the world, Helen Harrison from Ontario, was licensed to fly in four different countries.

Yet, during the early part of the First World War, the closest she was allowed to get to combat was training future Air Force pilots at the Kitchener Flying Club. The irony of being considered good enough to train men but not to fly with them was not lost on Harrison.

Her frustration increasing daily, Harrison heard of Jacqueline Cochrane's American female pilots, who were on their way to Britain to become ferry pilots.

The Canadian woman could not resist this golden opportunity and headed across the border. Once in Britain, she became a member of the Air Transport Auxiliary, where for two years she ferried virtually every type of combat plane.

In 1943, she returned to Canada for a



well earned leave and was heralded by the government as a role model for all women in the war effort. One of the most experienced pilots in the world, she was never allowed in combat.

RUTH McILRATH, born the daughter of a Saskatchewan farmer, cut her teeth on hardship and the Depression. As nursing was about the only profession open to women in those days, she joined the Winnipeg General Hospital.

The year 1943 found McIlrath aboard the hospital ship Lady Nelson bringing the wounded back from the desert campaign to England.

The ship was constantly at risk from bombing while in harbor but it was a stop in Cyprus that brought the ship closest to disaster and gave the nurses their greatest challenge.

While docked alongside another ship, the nurses were granted a few hours' shore leave. Ruth and four colleagues had just reached the centre of the town and started to relax, when a huge explosion blew off roofs and shattered windows.

When they finally reached the harbor, they were horrified to find that the Lady Nelson had tied up alongside an ammo ship that had exploded.

Upon reaching the Lady Nelson, they found the gangways were gone and the launch could not tie up but there were two rope ladders hanging over the side. The nurses managed one by one to grab a ladder and climb on board.

The wards were a shambles and the ship itself looked as if it would never sail again, but it did, within 24 hours. In that 24 hours, neither the crew nor the nurses closed their eyes but the next day, the wounded were brought on board and the Lady Nelson began another mission of mercy.

THE FEW STORIES told here are in essence the stories of thousands of women. These women fought two wars, one against the common enemy and one against prejudice, and paved the way for today's women. ■■





File photo

Memory by Robert Marjoribanks

We were in the midst of a war but university students were exempted from compulsory military service on the dubious assumption that our education would be required for the reconstruction of the country after the war. Male students were required to join the university contingent of the Canadian Officers Training Corps.

We assembled in the Armories or on the back campus two or three times a week to learn to march in step and to take apart and reassemble Bren machine guns, which we never ever fired. Our ill-fitting, mismatched, worn-out battle-dress uniforms were hand-me-downs discarded by the real soldiers.

There never was such a bedraggled, inept, unwilling military force in the history of warfare. Our officers were

East meets West

professors and they delighted in the opportunity of swanning about the campus with swagger sticks under their arms, accepting salutes from the other ranks who were scurrying between lectures.

At my next medical examination, an astute young university doctor counted my eyes and—since I had only one—told me that I would make my stand against the Nazis on the banks of Toronto's Don River.

I did respond, however, to another patriotic appeal—for volunteers to help bring in the wheat harvest in Western Canada. My motives were not entirely patriotic; we were assured that our absence from lectures during the fall term would be given some weight in calculating our examination results.

We were joined by contingents from other eastern universities and were transported by train, at government expense, to Saskatchewan. I travelled with two old high school friends and we pledged to stick together, whatever life on the farm might bring.

We travelled in "colonist cars" that were designed in the last century to transport European settlers to their western homesteads. We slept on wooden shelves without mattresses. There was a stove at one end of the car on which the old settlers would boil their borscht. Instead, we lived on sandwiches, of the consistency of card-

board, which we snatched up at each station stop.

Our contingent got off the train at Allan Hills, a village of a few hundred souls, south of Saskatoon. Our prospective employers were standing on the platform in their overalls to receive the forces that had come to save their crops. They had been warned to expect city slickers who had never bent their backs to a stook but they could never have anticipated the swarm of intellectual riffraff in blazers, scarves, football shirts and other bits of collegiate paraphernalia.

They assessed us with cattle buyers' eyes. My friend Alex, nicknamed Tank because of his impressive bulk, attracted some attention and Keith, a Varsity quarterback, seemed a likely pick, but my own graceful form did not recommend me as a farm laborer. My two loyal friends, however, accepted an invitation from a farmer on the condition that he take me into the bargain.

We climbed into the back of his half-ton pickup and began the drive down concession roads to his farm. As we bumped along, Tank said he was prepared for hardship and deprivation but not horses. He had a fear and loathing of animals.

The farm house was a one-storey frame building clad in tarpaper. We were lodged in the attic, Tank and I in one room and Keith in another. Our beds were separated by an up-ended orange crate supporting an oil lamp.

Combines were very much in vogue in Western Canada at the time but these self-propelled monsters that reap and thresh the grain as they crawl over the fields had not yet reached Allan Hills. We would each have a team of horses and a wagon. The wheat had already been stooked and our job was to go up and down the rows tossing the stooks into the wagon with pitchforks.

When it was full, we would take our load and pitch it into the threshing machine, an erratic contraption, once powered by steam but now driven by a belt attached to the tractor engine. It swallowed our stooks and spat wheat

out in one direction and straw in another.

Although most of the Canadian prairie is notoriously flat, our district was hilly and, if you were careless in navigating a slope, the loaded wagon box would tip off its chassis, spilling your stooks over the stubble. Then you had to catch your team, which had trotted off in alarm, find someone to help you put the box back on the chassis and, finally, pitch all of the spilled stooks back into the wagon.

If you could arrange it, you tried to arrive at the threshing machine at the end of a queue. That way you got a chance to rest while the others were being unloaded. Also we discovered

*WE DISCOVERED THAT, IF YOU PITCHED
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SIDEWAYS INSTEAD OF HEAD-FIRST, THE
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PROLONGED REST WHILE IT WAS BEING
REPAIRED.*

that, if you pitched the stooks onto the conveyer sideways instead of head-first, the machine had a tendency to break down and you could enjoy a prolonged rest while it was being repaired.

The work day began before dawn. Your first duty, after struggling into your overalls by lamplight, was to feed and harness your horses. There would be a sheet of ice on the water trough and the frozen ruts in the barnyard could easily break an ankle. The barn itself was dimly lit by a lantern hanging on the wall.

The horses were standing two to a stall, presenting their hind ends, and the first challenge was to pass the bridle over their heads. To do that, however, you first had to breach the seemingly impassable wall of horse flesh formed by their massive buttocks. We eventually learned that the only way to reach their heads was to hurl yourself between the two animals thumping them with your fists and screaming obscenities.

Having harnessed your team and fed them some hay and a scoop of mash,

you were free to sit down to breakfast with the farmer, his wife, two young children, and a hired hand who was called — sometimes to his face — Old Misery.

Breakfast was hearty and plentiful — porridge, bacon and eggs, and fresh-baked white bread cut in slices the size of doorsteps and slathered with fresh butter. We found this menu daunting the first morning but, after that, we ate desperately everything in sight, knowing that, no matter how much we consumed, we would be starving by 10 o'clock.

At noon, one of the children would ride bare-back into the field where we were working with a basket of sandwiches and a bucket of coffee. On especially cold days or when it was snowing we took turns eating our sandwiches in the heated cab of the tractor. The farmer had butchered a hog shortly before we arrived and had pickled it in brine.

We were living a horror story but, at the same time, we were relishing the effect it would create over beers back home.

Tank, in spite of his substantial girth, was the only one who failed to stay the course. I came over a small ridge with my team one afternoon to find him sitting on the stubble smoking one of his hand-twisted cigarettes. He announced that he had quit.

Keith and I stayed on to finish threshing the farmer's crop and the crops of two neighbors, all for 40 cents an hour.

Each night the setting sun produced brilliant crimson streaks in the wide western sky. A cold wind would blow as I reined my team through the farm gate toward the little farm house, windows glowing with lamplight and smoke curling from the chimney.

Time has softened the memory of those fall days, but that image still remains strong. ■

(Born in Scotland, Robert Marjoribanks worked as a writer and editor for Canadian Press, Saturday Night and other publications. A retired public servant, he now lives in Ottawa.)

Jamboree

Canadian women volunteered in many ways for the war effort. There were simple comforts like quilts for British civilians, hand-made socks and warm sweaters for the soldiers. Perhaps the sweetest of all was the "Jam, Jelly, Honey and Canned Fruit" project.

Women, especially those in the fruit-growing areas of Canada, made jam for the Red Cross to send to the homeless, orphans, aged and wounded in military hospitals.

The Canadian Red Cross Society initiated this project but was joined by the 75,000 Women's Institute members in more than 3,000 places in Canada.

The Red Cross supplied the cans, cases, some sugar and financed the warehouses and shipping. It, with WI branches, organized the canning centres, provided the fruit and processed or collected the honey and commercial jam.

The B.C. efforts included 70 canning kitchens and canneries.

The women who did this canning came from every walk of life — mothers of nine and 10 children to widows running their own farms. Elderly military men of the district also helped with packing and labeling.

British Columbia, Alberta and Manitoba took an active part in the project. In 1941, Saskatchewan was unable to participate because there were poor crops that year.

Manitoba's contribution that year was 1,000 four-pound cans of honey, sent in co-operation with the Co-operative Honey Producers Ltd. Alberta Women's Institutes sent 34,000 pounds of commercial jam or honey.

In 1941, British Columbia women jammed and canned 52.5 tons of surplus fruit to be sent overseas via the Panama Canal.

One woman wrote of the satisfaction of making jam for Britain. "I feel sure that the jam which left our canning kitchen was full of love and laughter, and when the tins are opened I can almost see the fairies and little pixies hopping out with a message of good cheer for the boys and girls of Britain. You should have heard the chatter and laughter when our jam was made."

Her group worked inside an old corrugated-iron building. It was equipped with an ordinary cook stove and three double-burner oil stoves. When those stoves were going full blast,

By Liz Betz



"it was as hot as Hades," she wrote.

Enormous quantities of sugar were used — as much as 450 pounds a day, in a single canning kitchen. Sugar rationing was in effect, the amounts set at 3/4 pound per person per week.

No one was allowed to have more than a two-week supply on hand at any time, except in remote areas. These women and others in the community needed to raise funds to buy sugar, or in some cases, the sugar was saved from their personal rations.

A B.C. community carried out the work using local resources like a high school kitchen.

Appeals were made for surplus fruit. The high school principal and assistants collected the donated fruit. Parent Teacher Associations organized berry picking parties.

Eight hundred and thirty-eight pounds of blackberry jam joined the other jams made for overseas.

Another small community of 2,000 inhabitants processed eight tons of fruit. The season opened with an appeal made in the paper for fruit, women to help can it, boys and girls to pack and label, men to lift and store, and for canning companies to loan equipment.

Money for sugar and donations of sugar were collected every Saturday night at a special booth on Main street, where everything from vegetables to flowers were sold.

The project used vast quantities of fruit and vegetables that might otherwise have been wasted. Crops rotted in the fields due to lack of markets. Those involved in sending jams and honey overseas were deeply touched by grateful letters from people in Britain who received treats from Canada.

Britain's citizens were then under a jam ration — one half pound, per person, per month.

"Believe me your peaches are like gold dust to us," a London City Council rescue worker wrote. "We opened a can to celebrate the birthday of one of six children all under 12 years of age. What a surprise!"

A letter from the St. Margaret Home for the Aged at Bethnal, expressed: "Our most grateful thanks for the jam, which was being saved as a special treat for a Sunday dinner."

Inspired by the ideal of the Red Cross, Canadian women contributed time, effort and money to alleviate suffering caused by war. It was a labor of love.

LOOKING FOR POINSETTIAS?

By Sara Williams

Within a week or so poinsettias will be on display in public conservatories and on sale at local greenhouses, garden centres and retail stores. Nowhere is it truer that you get what you pay for than with poinsettias. Growing them well takes time, labor and dedication to detail — and there's usually a great deal of difference between small plants that have been carelessly produced and larger plants of excellent quality. Although six-inch pots are standard, hanging baskets, "minis" for a table or desk, and larger pots containing two or three well developed plants and suitable for the floor are also available. Prices vary considerably, ranging from \$6 for a small plant to about \$60 for a high quality "triple."

Look for poinsettias with dark green foliage to the soil line. Leaves that have been bruised or broken in the course of handling or shipping often ooze latex that discolors them. Poor growing conditions result in fallen leaves and bare stems, while yellow or spotted leaves may indicate the presence of white flies or aphids on the underside of leaves. The "flowers" (actually bracts or modified leaves) should be fully colored with no hint of green around their margins. And if the yellow-green buds of the actual flowers are present but

have not expanded, the plant is probably in fresh condition.

There are many cultivars to choose from. Among the classic poinsettias that remain firmly on the best seller list are Cortez and Freedom. Both have dark green leaves and deep red bracts, a symmetrical habit, are not overly tall, carry their leaves and bracts to the

soil line, and offer a long "shelf life" in your home. Freedom develops coloration earlier and is one of the first poinsettias available during the holiday season. Galaxy and Red Velvet are newer but similar.

There are a number of cultivars with variegated leaves and bracts that are a solid red, pink or white. In contrast, the "marbled" poinsettias have solid green leaves but bracts that are pink with wide cream-colored margins.

Jingle Bells has red bracts with light pink flecks. Monet has white bracts with red streaks. Peppermint has large flat, pastel pink bracts dotted with small red flecks.

Winter Rose, introduced last year, has deep red bracts and green leaves, both of which curl under, giving the plant a rose-like appearance, hence the name. About 14-18 inches high, it is compact and more upright than most poinsettias. Carousel has green leaves and red bracts, both of which are somewhat twisted and ruffled. The oak-leaf poinsettias have lobed leaves resembling those

of an oak. Whitestar and Whitecap are the purist whites on the market. Both are extremely symmetrical and dense, and have proven very popular in the last few years.

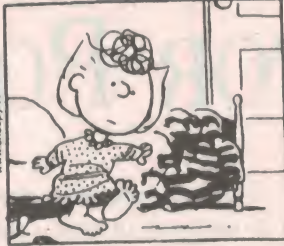
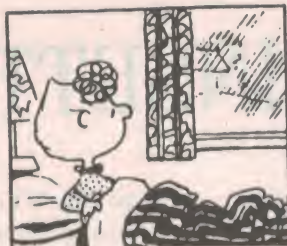
Moving a tropical plant from the controlled temperatures of a greenhouse to the warmth of your home in November can be fraught with danger on the Prairies. They are very susceptible to chilling injury. If exposed to temperatures below 10°C leaves may blacken or drop. The poinsettia should be well wrapped (several layers of newspaper followed by a plastic bag with plenty of air spaces in between to act as insulation) and placed immediately in a nearby, warm vehicle.

Once home, remove the wrapping or sleeve carefully. (Leaving the poinsettia within its sleeve for a few days may cause damage due to the accumulation of ethylene gas.) Ensure that the foil wrapping, if present, does not impede drainage. Place the plant in a cool room (17–20°C) where it will receive at least six hours of bright but indirect light daily. Avoid direct sunlight or placing plants near sources of heat or where they may be exposed to drafts.

Water a poinsettia thoroughly — water should seep out of the drainage hole — as soon as the soil feels dry to the touch, but never allow it to stand in water. Fertilize according to label directions with a soluble house plant fertilizer such as 20-20-20. With proper care, your poinsettia can last three to four months. ■



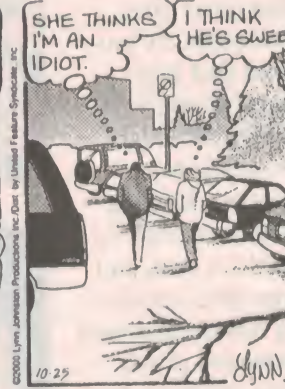
PEANUTS Classics



RURAL ROOTZ



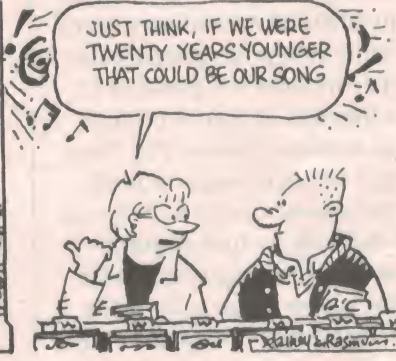
For BETTER or for WORSE



GARFIELD

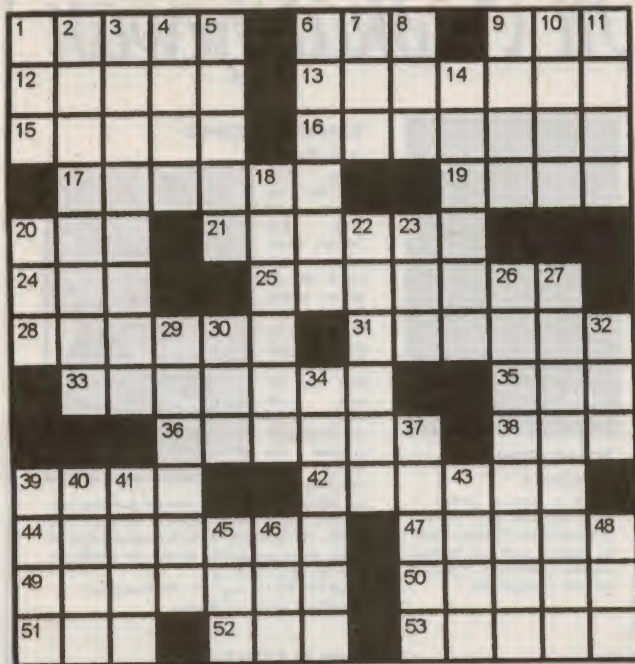


BETTY



Canadian Criss Cross

by Walter D. Feener



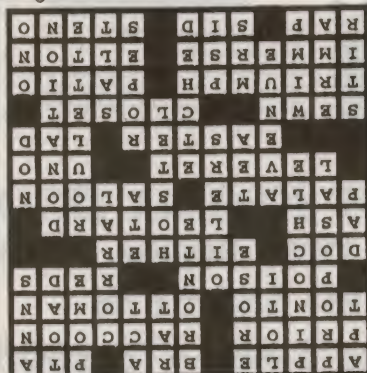
ACROSS

1. Granny Smith
6. Lingerie item
9. School organization
12. Coming before
13. Masked animal
15. Lone Ranger's pal
16. Cushioned footstool
17. Lethal substance
19. Keaton movie
20. Grumpy's friend
21. Each of two
24. Powdered lava
25. Acrobat's garment
28. Roof of the mouth
31. Tavern
33. Young hare
35. Numero ____
36. Paschal festival
38. Youth
39. Worked with needle and thread
42. Storage room
44. Be victorious
47. Barbecue site
49. Dip into water
50. Singer John
51. Prison sentence
52. Mr. Caesar
53. Shorthand pro

DOWN

1. Quick to learn
2. Offer of marriage
3. Card game played with a double deck
4. "Matelot" author
5. Appearing as if gnawed
6. "Wuthering Heights" author
7. Turncoat
8. Deed
9. Quince
10. Amphibian
11. Wilson and Sothorn
14. Horse pen
18. Edmonton team
20. Fish on top of the water
22. Lodging place
23. Long a in Greek

26. Gambling game
27. Gift
29. Wide street
30. Common drink
32. Realm of sleep
34. Burned into
37. Catches calves
39. Mix with a spoon
40. ____ Bombeck
41. Non-aggressive person
43. NaCl
45. Wife's title
46. Greek letter
48. Yoko ____



MAILBOX

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Wanted to buy: Electric rock polisher, six to 10 inches in diameter. — Edward Senft, Box 1113, Esterhazy, Sask. S0A 0X0.

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Wanted: Address of Shotgun Press a USA book publisher. Also, where to obtain okra or gumbo tablets or capsules found in health food stores. Has anyone the words to the poem The Emperor Moth, author unknown. Will pay postage. — E. Ferris, Box 271, Grande Prairie, Alta. T8V 3A4.

Wanted: Used Canadian postage stamps. Will trade for postage stamps from Germany, Republic of China, etc., 60 stamps to trade. Write: Peter Waldner, Box 569, Etzikom, Alta. T0K 0W0.

Wanted: Collector lapel pins of any sort. Please write with description and price. — Bridget Kurysh, Box 3246, Humboldt, Sask. S0K 2A0.

Wanted: Used knitting machine in working order. Willing to pay any price. Contact: Elizabeth Wurtz, Box 68, Gem, Alta. T0J 1M0, fax 403-641-2182 or phone 403-641-2141.

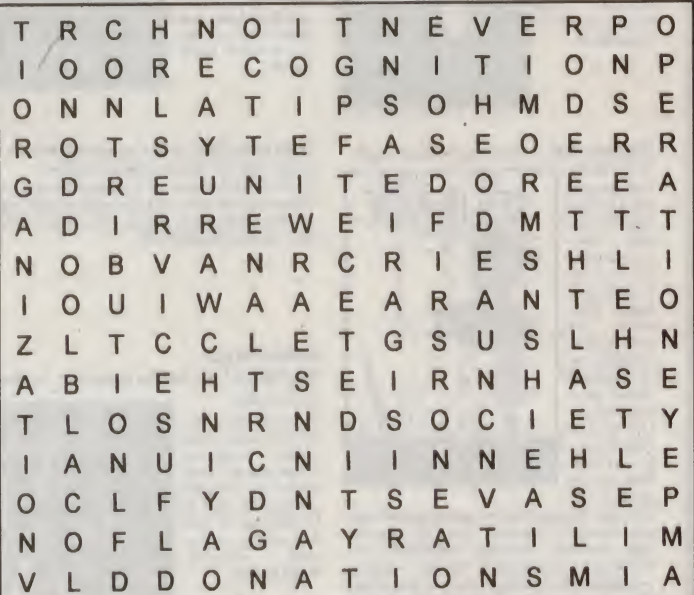
Brunskill Home and School Association and Varsity View Community Association invite Varsity View residents and present and former Brunskill School students and teachers to a celebration of the new school, Oct. 21, 2000. There will be tours of the school, a program, displays from the Brunskill archives and a dance. If you were part of Brunskill's first kindergarten class (1951) or taught at the school in the 1950s, please call 306-343-9318 or Brunskill School, 306-683-7130.

Prairie Rose R.M. #309 history books still available. Two-volume set, 1036 pages of family histories and pictures, etc. \$91 per set including GST. For information phone 306-365-4760 or 306-528-4630 or write: Dorothy Pomfret, Box 40, Lockwood, Sask. S0K 2R0.

THE RED CROSS

Word Find puzzle
by Janice M. Peterson

When all the words in the list have been found, the letters left over will spell the solution.



Aims
Blood Donor
Care
Contribution
Disaster
Donations
Emergency
First Aid
Flag
Food
Health
Help

Hospital
International
Local
Medical
Military
Nations
Nursing
Operation
Organization
Prevention
Recognition
Safety

Saves
Services
Shelters
Society
United
Volunteer
War

Solution
(15 letters):

needed
when
There



Home Grown In Saskatchewan

LAND OF LIVING SKIES

— 2001 Calendar

by Tourism Saskatchewan

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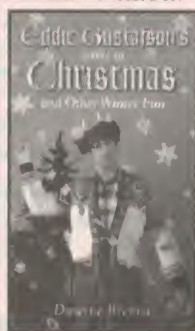
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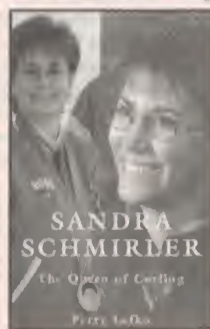
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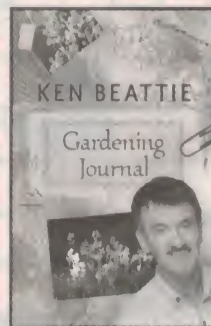
When a popular lecturer is found murdered at the university where Joanne Kilbourn teaches, Regina's small and fractious academic community is divided over who is responsible.

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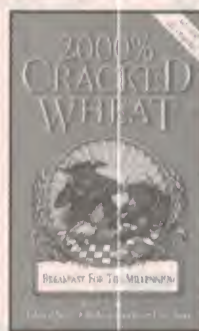
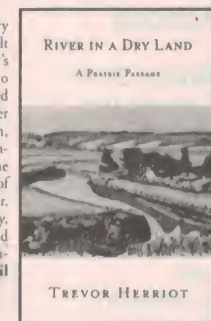
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RIVER IN A DRY LAND

by Perry Lefko

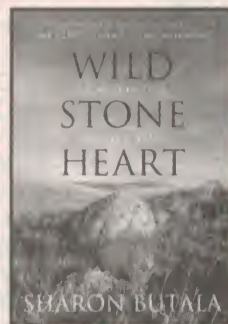
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